DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 393 573 PS 024 047

AUTHOR Mertan, Biran
TITLE Early Childhood Education in Northern Cyprus.
PUB DATE Sep 95
NOTE 9p.; Paper presented at the European Conference on the Quality of Early Childhood Education (5th, Paris, France, September 7-9, 1995).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Caregiver Child Relationship; *Child Rearing; *Day Care; Day Care Centers; *Early Childhood Education; *Educational History; Elementary School Students; Employed Parents; Foreign Countries; Grandparents; *Mothers; Needs Assessment; Parent Child Relationship; Preschool Children
IDENTIFIERS Child Care Needs; *Cyprus; Historical Background; Turks

ABSTRACT

The history of early childhood education in Cyprus, from the time of the Ottoman Empire to the present, is reviewed in this paper as the context for reporting on a survey of 1,071 full-time and working Turkish Cypriot mothers regarding the daily difficulties of child rearing. The survey was undertaken to inform policymaking efforts of the government in Northern Cyprus as it considers the problems of nonparental care and working mothers. Child rearing and early childhood education in the Ottoman Period, the British Period, and at the present time are reviewed. The survey results present a picture of the current situation with regard to demand for day care and day care centers, care by grandmothers, and reactions of children to grandmothers and mothers. Results highlight the need for a consistent preschool education policy. (Contains 16 references.) (DR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN NORTHERN CYPRUS

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Biran MERTAN
NEAR EAST UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
NORTHERN CYPRUS

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Mertan Biran
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

ED 393 573

In North Cyprus, as in other societies, the number of working mothers is increasing day by day. This active participation of women in social life, specially in the urban areas, provokes the need of care-giving centers. Because of the family costumes and insufficient number of day-care centers, many parents prefer to ask grand-mothers to take care of their young children.

However, in order to find a rapid solution to the preschool education problems, the Ministry of Education has decided to descend the schooling age and make the obligatory education start at the age of 6. The laws and regulations of preschool education are not completely settled and still it is a daily subject of discussion.

The purpose of this research is:
1/ to give a brief historical development on Cyprus Early Childhood Education since the Ottoman period up today;
2/ to show the results of survey study carried on 1071 full-time and working Turkish Cypriot mothers, where their everyday difficulties on child caring are detailed (GUNSEL & MERTAN, 1994);
3/ to show the results on educational style differences between mother and grand-mother and the affective development of the child towards these intimate adults (MERTAN, 1993; MERTAN, 1994). The test '*La journée de bébé*' (BALLEYGUIER, 1979) is adapted and applied for data collection.

It is very difficult to talk about the social policy and researches on the domain of non-parental childcaring in Northern Cyprus because they are almost non-existent. In spite of increasing number of working mothers, the problem has been ignored by politicians and mothers themselves as well.

The reason why the government lacks a consistent policy on non-parental childcare in Northern Cyprus might only be revealed through a profound historical analysis of "*society*".

I - HISTORICAL OUTLINE

Since Cyprus is at the "*crossroads*" of a number of ancient civilizations, the education system had been influenced by them. Cyprus is the third largest island in Eastern Mediterranean, after Sicily and Sardinia.

1. Preschool Education in the Ottoman Period (1571-1878)

The Ottoman education system was, by and large, based on religious principles. Unfortunately, it was not possible to trace such concepts as preschool education systems in the Ottoman period. However, it would be useful to mention briefly about the "*sibyan*" classes of elementary schools. Although the required age for those classes were not very clear, it was assumed to be four (BEHCET, 1969). There

PS 021047

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

was mix-age group education in the Sibyan classes. Girls and boys used to study together. A child starting school at that age was "*confided*" to the teacher in a special religious ceremony called "*Amin Alayı*". The sibyan school teachers were required to have some qualifications. Up until the year 1869 male teacher had to have a middle school and university education of several years, or be an "*imam*" or "*muezzin*" at a mosque. On the other hand, female teachers were required to read the Qu'ran, have knowledge on child development and be of mature age.

2. The British Period (1878-1960)

When the British rented Cyprus from Ottoman and took over the administration in 1878, there were 65 Turkish elementary schools on the island. Up to 1929 co-meetings of Ottoman together with British educators were organized by Elementary Education Committees, decisions of which were made in an atmosphere of mutual understanding. The necessity to take care and educate the children at the age of 4 to 6 was arisen in 1926. At the time there were only four schools of that type in Cyprus: one in Famagusta and three in Nicosia.

WEIR (1952) in his book "*Education in Cyprus*", presenting an outline of education system since early 1878s, described it as following:

"The nursery school is entirely lacking in Cyprus. Some years ago there were a few schools of that type in larger towns and they used to be supported by Government; but they were closed due to problems in economy. It was a matter of deciding where the limited funds could be best spent. There were no trained teachers for such schools, and no means of training them. In the circumstances it was decided that, first of all, elementary education should be put on a sound basis. Trained teachers, new buildings and equipment were required for that. Nursery schools had to wait". What was told by WEIR in 1952 might be successfully referred to current preschool education system in Cyprus.

A rapid proliferation of women emancipation for that period of time had become the subject of heated discussions among working women. The Cypriot women claimed firmly their rights for participation in all spheres of social life. Unfortunately, this period coincides with the period when the conflict between the two communities Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots was extremely intense. An attempt to combine those two activities, i.e. to deal with the critical political situation and simultaneously to work out projects on education system could not be sufficiently successive. They were, naturally, spending much of their energy on stopping the conflict between the two communities.

3. Current Situation

The period between sixties to eighties might be estimated as "*Stagnant*" period, since the development had been made was too slight on the domain of preschool education to be noticed. Just after the separation of the two communities, rehabilitation of the societies were the major purport to focus on for both communities. Here I intend to expose only what is happening in Northern Part of the Island concerning the preschool education.

In spite of political problems existing on the Island more attention and fund have been spent on education since a decade. For a long time the education, for policy makers started with elementary education. Only for a couple of years (1993) different parties during their political campaign started to propose projects on non-parental childcare. These projects failed to be realized partly due to missing infrastructure (building, education materials, teachers....). I view that another important factor, besides the infrastructure that caused to this failure, is the lack of sufficient demand and pressure by working women and "*Women Right*" groups. Families are still rather conventional in solving down their own childcaring problem: the case to be care-givers for grand-mothers has become very typical. Of course, this choice of parents is influenced by the following factors as well: the needs of parents and their child; the availability of services; the cost of services; and the type of care that parents would prefer.

Through investigations of the family structure, we realized why this model of child caring is reinforced. As MURDOCK (1974) believes "the nuclear family is a universal human social grouping, it exists as a distinct and strongly functional group in every known society". The current Turkish Cypriot family structure is an amalgam of nuclear and extended family (A family consisting of several generations of blood relatives.). Family relations are still strong. Though the community does have a sound cultural and educational background, it is quite conservative in child rearing. People get married and have children at a relatively young age (72 % is between 17-25 years old) compared to other European countries (GÜNSEL, 1994). Families, (we mean parents, and grand-parents) are forming their own nuclear family, they are all living in the same building i.e. apartment house. But this cohabitation does not have the form of extended family because each couple has his/her own separate house, their nuclear family.

Because of this firm proximity, willing of grand-parents to provide care and the other cultural factors, young couple prefer to confide their child to their parents rather than looking for other choices of day care arrangement. Another important cultural factor that might influence is the traditional belief of the people: infants at least till the end of their second year should be reared at home and surrounded with love in the family. As for maternity leave, Turkish Cypriot women have only forty days after the delivery. After that period they may have only an hour per day as "*breast-feeding*" permission for six months. This "*breast feeding*" situation causes many psychological problems to the working mother: just in the middle of working hours she has to leave her job, hurry up to home in order just to feed her baby and restart her unfinished work... Although this breast feeding permission gives the working mother the opportunity to spend some time with her baby during working hours, it also bears disadvantages like feeding the child within limited time, in a stressful manner. Another factor influencing the family choice is the cost of childcaring. Minimum wage rate per head is 137 USD per month (9.200.000 TL) in Northern Cyprus. The average cost of childcaring per child is 60 USD per month (4.000.000 TL). Expenditure on childcaring is out of possibilities of family budget i.e. is the cost on childcare constitutes about 1/2 of family budget. Consequently, childcare provided by relatives especially by grandparents appears to be inevitable for parents.

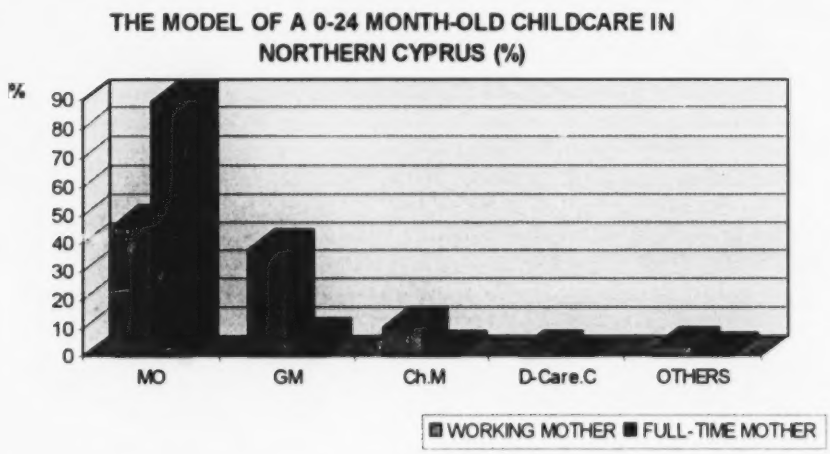
II - RESULTS

A - Results of survey study

In the Department of Psychology at Near East University we embarked on a series of investigations on Early Childhood Education since 1993. The main objective of this research program is to reveal the problems of the preschool education in Northern Cyprus and to make practical recommendations on solution of the problem. The first study was (GÜNSEL, 1994) carried on 1071 mothers (working or full-time mother) having a child attending the preparatory class of elementary school (between age of 60-72 months). By means of questionnaires different models of childcaring for children between 0 to 6 years old, a general information on family structure and daily working problems that families facing have been collected. 60 % of those working mothers participating in this study have got five workdays per week and eight hours per day (28% six workdays per week). 46.83 % of the women are working in public sectors and 32.58 % are working in private sectors. The percentage of working mothers constitutes 42.90 % of randomly selected subjects, while full-time mothers is 57.10 % .

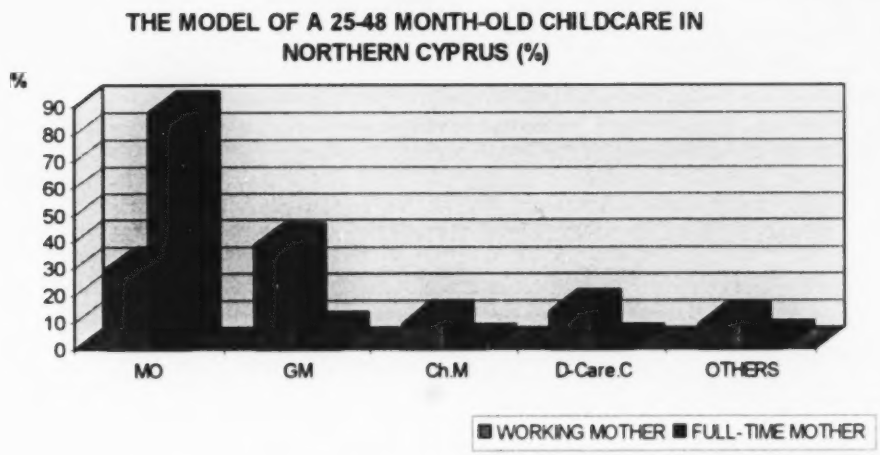
The following three graphics will present different models of childcaring according to the age and mothers' social position (GÜNSEL & MERTAN, 1994).

GRAPHIC 1:



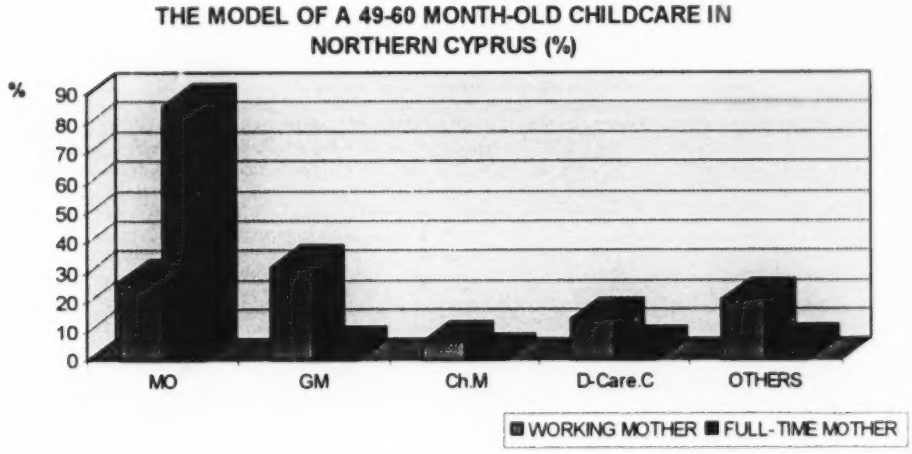
As it is illustrated on the graphic the majority of mothers take care of their babies by themselves from birth till the end of second year (90 % of full-time and 45 % of working mothers) ($t(449) = 13.67$, $p < .001$). We can assume that half of the working mothers start working after the second birthday of their children. Regarding the grand-mothers care-giving the differences between working and full-time mothers are significantly higher. ($t(449) = 15.62$, $p < .001$).

GRAPHIC 2:



One of the important results we obtained is the fact that the demand for day-care centers besides the care provided by grandparents and childminders for a 25-48 month-old group is increasing. As it is shown on the previous graphic, the demand for day-care centers was almost not existing for a 0-24 month-old group. Here, we are observing a significant increase for day-care centers and other collective models of child care centers among the working mothers ($t(457) = 7.50$, $p < .001$; $t(457) = 4.07$, $p < .001$). One of the factors influencing this increase is that these centers usually accept children who has already completed their toilet training. Comparing the full-time mother group with the working one we observe that the demand for childminders is significantly higher ($t(457) = 14.82$, $p < .001$).

GRAPHIC 3:



For the working mother group, across the ages, we are observing that the demand for care-centers is increasing significantly ($t(419) = 6.31$, $p < .001$). What is peculiar about this age group is the fact that the 27.34 % of the children still do not go to any kind of collective care centers, though they are 5 years old. However, those grandparents (about 35 %) providing care for their grandchildren from the early ages, keep providing care till the beginning of preparatory class of the elementary school. It is

assumed that grandparents' caregiving is the most stable one amongst the other models of care giving. The results from the survey also indicates that the rest of the parents are often changing childminders and centers. These changes bring about adaptation problem in child particularly at the beginning of the elementary school it creates troubles for them.

Children enter primary school at the age of seven. Since 1994 the Ministry of National Education has made some changes and descended the schooling age to 6. For instance, the majority of these preparatory classes are situated in the elementary school buildings. Out of 135 existing preparatory classes, only thirty are in separate independent nursery schools. Teachers are, the graduates of "*Teacher Training College*" and since the last year they undertake in-service preschool education training organized by the Ministry. A special team was created in order to work on curriculum development.

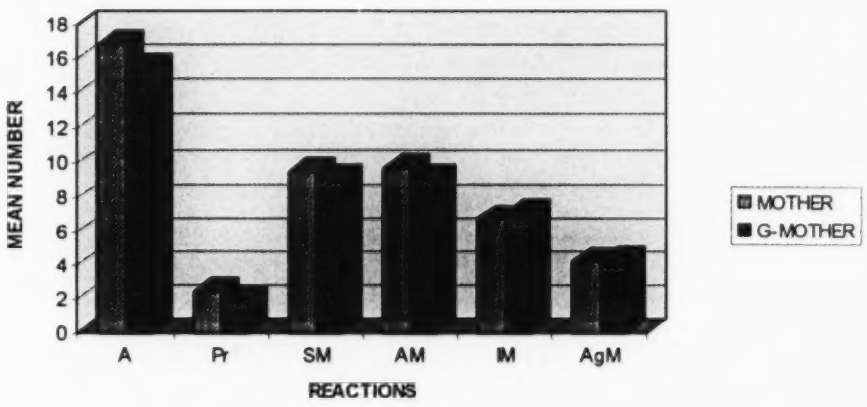
B - Care Provided by Grandmothers

From the survey study it has been found that 35 % of the children are cared by grandparents. We are formulating the hypothesis that the grandparents providing care would show more laxity attitude than the mothers. Therefore another study carried on at Near East University is on educational style differences between mother and grand-mother and the affective development of child towards these intimate adults (MERTAN, 1993; MERTAN, 1994). For that purpose the test "*La journée de bébé*" (BALLEYGUIER, 1979) has been translated from French to Turkish language, adapted and applied on twelve 16 to 24 month-old children. Analyses of the results have been based on two principle variables:

1. Variable of the child (A: Autonomy; Pr: Cleanness; SM: Submission to Mother (obedient) AM: Affection towards Mother; IM: Imitation of Mother; AgM: Aggression towards Mother).

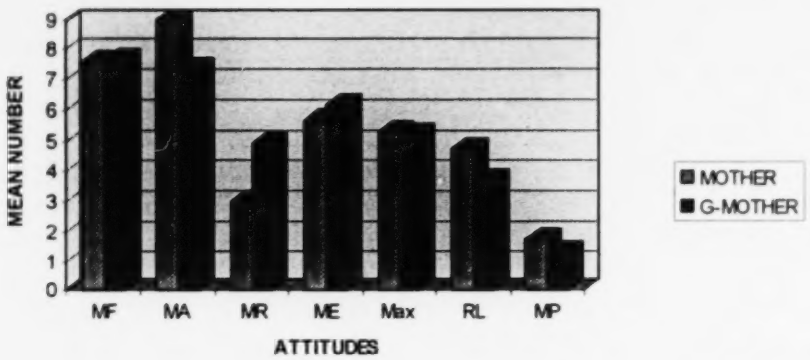
2. Variable of the environment (MF: Mother's Weakness; MA: Mother's Affection; MR: Mother's Rigidity; ME. Education given by Mother (nurture); Max: Mother's Anxiety; RL: Release of Bonds by Mother; MP: Toilette Training by Mother).

GRAPHIC 4: VARIABLE OF THE CHILD



The results on affective development show that the children have got the same reaction towards their mothers and grandmothers.

GRAPHIC 5: VARIABLE OF THE ENVIRONMENT



Regarding the environmental variables, contrary to our hypothesis we are observing that grandmothers are showing more rigidity towards their grandchildren than mothers ($t(12) = 3.31$, $p < .05$). These results are in accordance with those obtained by other authors (PARKE & LEWIS, 1981; PARKE & TINSLEY, 1982; TINSLEY & PARKE, 1984) indicating that all kinds of adults are acting in a non-laxity manner, from the moment of their responsibility for child.

DISCUSSION

Much researches on the cross-cultural studies (BEKMAN, 1982; HENNESSY, MARTIN, MOSS & MELHUISH, 1992; KAGITÇIBAŞI, 1990; PIERREHUMBERT, 1992; SUWA, KENEDA & SHIBITA, 1992) showed the importance of policies and researches on non-parental childcare.

The case of Northern Cyprus concerning the non-parental childcare is just on the starting point of the issue. Although consistent preschool education policy is not existing, since 1993 projects and research programs to provide schooling to 5-6 years old children has been on process by the Ministry of Education.

On the other hand, at Near East University researches on a 0-36 month-old children's non-parental care arrangements and their influence on child development are studying.

What is needed in Northern Cyprus concerning preschool education system is the reconsideration of Constitution. For this reason the two concerned ministries (Education and Health) are to collaborate and re-establish a new preschool regulations which may meet the modern requirements.

REFERENCES

BALLEYGUIER, G. (1979). Test pour l'évaluation du caractère de l'enfant et des attitudes éducatives de l'entourage. Manuel FCB-C, EAP.

BEHÇET, H. (1969). Kıbrıs Türk Maarif tarihi (1571-1968). Lefkoşa, Cyprus.

BEKMAN, S (1990). Preschool education in Turkey: A study of relationship between children's behaviour, the aim of the programme and the sex and social class of the child. Doctoral Thesis, London University.

GÜNSEL, S.İ. (1994). Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'nde Okulöncesi Eğitimde Çağdaş Yapılanma Yöntemleri, Doctoral Thesis, NEU, Lefkoşa, TRNC.

GÜNSEL, S.İ. & MERTAN, B. (1994). Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'nde Okulöncesi Eğitim Sorunları, VIII Ulusal Psikoloji Kongresi, İzmir, Türkiye.

HENNESSY, E., MARTIN, S., MOSS, P. & MELHUISH, E. (1992). Children and Day Care, Lessons from Research. Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd.

KAĞITÇIBAŞI, Ç. (1990). Çocuk Gelişiminde Erken Destek Projesi: Türkiye örneği. Erken çocukluk eğtiminde farklı modeller, Sevda Bekman (Ed.), UNICEF, İstanbul.

MERTAN, B. (1993). Garde des jeunes enfants à Chypre du Nord, XI eme Collogue du Groupe Francophone d'Etudes du Développement de l'Enfant Jeune, Nantes, France.

MERTAN, B. (1994). Gardes des jeunes enfants par la grand-mère à Chypre du Nord, XII eme Collogue du Groupe Francophone d'Etudes du Développement de l'Enfant Jeune, Montpellier, France.

MURDOCK, G. P. (1974). The Nuclear Family. In D.W. McCurdy and J. P. Spradley (Eds.) Issues in cultural Anthropology. Boston: Little Brown.

PARKE, R. D. & LEWIS, N.G. (1981). The family in context: A multi-level interactional analysis of child abuse. In R.W. Henderson (Ed.), Parent-child interaction: Theory, research and prospect. New York: Academic Press.

PARKE, R. D. & TINSLEY, B. R. (1982). The early environment of the at-risk infant: Expanding the social context. In D. Bricker (Ed.), Intervention with at-risk and handicapped infants: From research to application. Baltimore: University Park Press.

PIERREHUMBERT, B (1992). L'accueil du jeune enfant, politiques et recherches dans les différents pays. Collection la vie de l'enfant. ESF editeur, Paris.

TINSLEY, B. R. & PARKE, R. D. (1984). Grandparents as Support and Socialization Agents. In M. Lewis (Ed.), Beyond the dyad. Plenum Press New York.

SUWA, K. KANEDA, T. & SHIBITA, K. (1992). Understanding of the quality in day nursery - through the process of cooperative research in the quality. Day nursery service for children under three in Japan. Toshiko Keneda & Kinu Suwa, (eds.) Japan.

WEIR, W. W. (1952). Education in Cyprus, some theories and practices in education in the island of Cyprus since 1878, Cosmos Press Ltd. Nicosia, Cyprus.